INTERAGENCY CONNECTION

Chair: Natalie Saiz, Natalie.V.Saiz@NASA.gov **Executive Director:** LeAnn Jenkins, leann.jenkins@gsa.gov

Strategic Connections resulting in Unique Solutions

Chair's Corner

As we approach the new fiscal year, we are changing officers in our Federal Executive Board!

I am assuming leadership from Tim Jeffcoat who has certainly demonstrated excellent leadership and commitment to the Houston FEB! I am honored and humbled to follow in his footsteps but fortunately, he'll still be around to provide advice and guidance.

I also wish to introduce our incoming Vice-Chair; Patrick Contreras is the Field Office Director of the Immigration & Customs Enforcement-ERO and will be serving as Vice Chair while Tim Jeffcoat transitions to Ex-Officio status.

Our FEB has certainly accomplished quite a bit and we plan to continue working hard for our federal community. We've been discussing the development of a strategic plan for our Houston FEB and we're counting on your input! More details forthcoming!

We are beginning the planning phase for our **2019 Leadership FEB class** schedule. You will see some changes in this program as we continue to make improvements! If you would like to host one of our forums during 2019, please contact LeAnn at leann.jenkins@gsa.gov. We ask our hosts to have the agency leader welcome the group with a "management briefing" that includes how your agency fits within the federal government, a bit of history if your agency/mission has gone through changes, what your mission/focus is today, what challenges and opportunities you foresee for your agency, and share some lessons from own personal leadership journey.

New to our lineup of offerings will be an **Interagency Mentoring program**. 2019 will be the first year we are coordinating this program on a trial basis, determined by the level of interest. Agency Executives must volunteer to be Mentors in order to nominate an agency employee as a Mentee. We are testing a short-term trial for a small group to learn and provide recommendations. Watch for more on this program in the coming year. I look forward to serving as your Chair!

Natalie

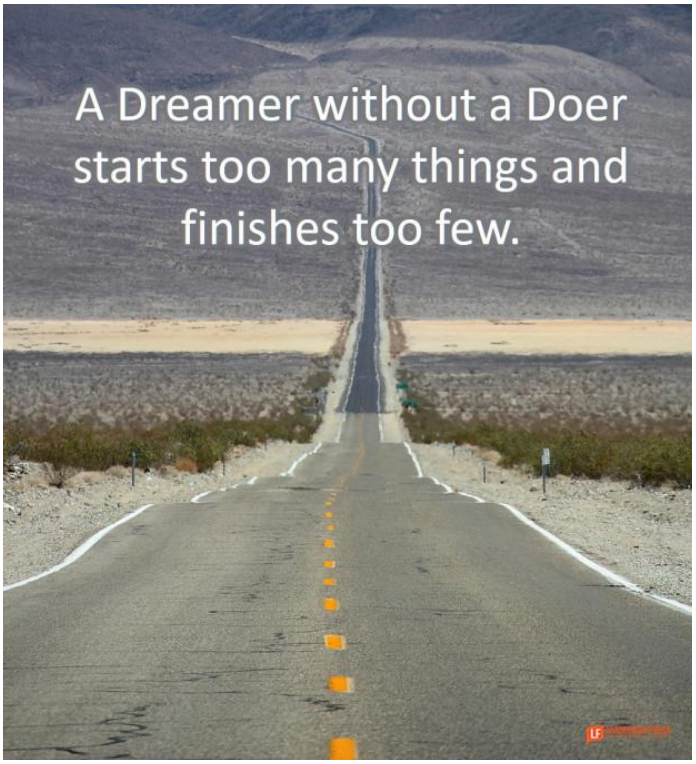
Natalie Saiz, Chair

HOW TO NAVIGATE PREDICTABLE TENSION BETWEEN DOERS AND DREAMERS

I heard a tense exchange between a Dreamer* and a Doer*. They're both committed to a new business venture. But you could feel them trying not to express frustration.

Buckle up:

The Dreamer asks the Doer to take charge of key areas of their new business.



Doers don't like flying by the seat of their pants.

He (the Dreamer) said, "Just take care of it." She (the Doer) immediately thought of execution and started asking questions.

It's a new venture. Uncertainty abounds. The Dreamer pulls answers out of the air.

How to go further:

Listen closely to a Doer's questions if you're a Dreamer. Doers know how to get things done. Dreamers know how to start things.

Listen closely to a Dreamer's vision if you're a Doer. Dreamers know how to create new opportunities.

- A Dreamer without a Doer starts too many things and finishes too few.
- A Doer without a Dreamer perfects processes and misses new opportunities.

Anticipate frustration:

Delight in Doer – Dreamer tension. You push each other. If you're a Dreamer remember that …

Dreamers need Doers more than Doers need Dreamers.

Respect a Doer's ability to get things done. Yes, a Doer's need for clarity drives Dreamers crazy. Create as much clarity as possible.

Clarify questions:

Don't give quick answers to Doers. *Ask them what they need to know.*

Explore the questions of dedicated Doers and you'll get more done. They aren't being resistant. They're figuring out how to finish.

Tip:

Whenever a Doer on the team is eager to move forward, jump on the pony and ride! I recently had a Doer on my team say we should just move forward. I didn't ask any questions. I moved forward.

https://leadershipfreak.blog/2018/07/30/how-to-navigate-predictable-tension-between-doers-and-dreamers/

Spotlighting Information in Public Service

Did you Know?

Honor the sacrifices of the Secret Service

by Washington Examiner July 22, 2018 12:00 AM

Throughout President Trump's trip across Europe this month, the U.S. Secret Service kept him and his team secure in several foreign cities and countries. From Brussels to London, and from rural England and Scotland to Helsinki, hundreds of special agents and officers ensured the president could do his job.

One of them, 42-year-old Secret Service special agent Nole Remagen, died on duty. Assigned to national security adviser John Bolton’s protective detail, Remagen suffered a stroke last weekend while standing post. He was cared for by fellow agents and a White House doctor, but Remagen died later in a hospital in the Scottish city of Glasgow.

This 19-year Secret Service veteran deserves remembrance, not simply for his ultimate sacrifice, but also for his service and that of his family. Secret Service duties require long periods away from home. Agents miss children's birthdays, weddings, anniversaries, and a multitude of national holidays. And that’s only half the story. Because agents and officers are also ready at all times to leave their families forever if needed. If, for example, this country was targeted by a nuclear attack, agents assigned to the president and those in the line of succession would need to evacuate the people they protect to secret and secure bunkers. The difficulty for agents doing this would be exacerbated by knowledge that while saving their boss they'd be leaving families to almost certain death.

Consider the sacrifice and patriotism here. Willingness to lose your own life and the lives of those most dear to you in order to serve your country is a level of honorable duty barely to be contemplated.

Remagen, who was a Marine before he joined the Secret Service, embodied that patriotism. He was a man of courage and dedication held in the highest regard by his comrades.

Yet the Secret Service cannot stop to mourn.

Reform is underway, but the agency still lacks sufficient personnel to fulfill all its duties. That’s partly because there are unnecessary security details, and also because there are many different threats to cover. Today, agents and officers such as Remagen must grapple with gunmen, suicide bombers, knife attackers, chemical weapons attackers, and aircraft-based attackers; and these can be highly organized, whether they represent a state or are working for a non-state group. Agents must be as ready for one idiot with a gun as they are for 30 foreign special forces soldiers armed with anti-tank weapons.

That mission causes immense stress, for it requires relentless attention to detail in chaotic public settings. It would be one thing if the president were to stay cocooned in the White House all day, but the president must be seen in public. For us, those interactions generate interesting news material. But for agents, every outstretched hand or hand in a pocket is a possible threat. By their dedication, Secret Service staff manage these concerns like no other protective agency on Earth. Day in and day out, agents and officers like Remagen keep the executive branch safe.

The Secret Service motto is "Worthy of trust and confidence." It's true, hard won, and retained only with vigilance and unremitting effort. It must be lived every day. As with special agent Nole Remagen, sometimes the life of service leads to the ultimate sacrifice. We should remember Remagen for himself and for what he represents.

The COIN Conversation Model

Taking the Sting Out of Difficult Feedback

Giving feedback can be tricky at times. Perhaps you need to have a "quiet word" with a team member about poor performance or negative behavior, but what starts out as an informal chat quickly spirals out of control. Harsh words are traded, accusations fly, and the relationship might be seriously damaged.

Or, you might find that the person nods in apparent understanding throughout your meeting, but his or her behavior or performance fails to improve.

What can you do to make sure that your feedback is assertive, fair and clear? And, most importantly, how can you ensure that he fully understands the changes or improvements that you expect from him?

The COIN Conversation Model is a simple framework that you can use to plan and structure difficult conversations and feedback in a non-confrontational way.

COIN stands for Context, Observation, Impact, and Next steps:

- **C**ontext: the circumstances, event or issue that you want to discuss.
- **O**bservation: specific, factual descriptions of what has happened.
- **I**mpact: how the event or issue that you're discussing affects others in your team or organization.
- **N**ext steps: a clear agreement on the changes or improvements in behavior or performance that you expect going forward.

Successful COIN conversations encourage positive, long-lasting change. They enable you to feed back to people firmly , but fairly, on what needs to improve.

They also help you to focus on the steps that your team member needs to take in order to achieve these objectives.

How to Use the COIN Conversation Model

The general rules that apply to most feedback conversations apply to COIN, too.

First, make sure that you hold the conversation with your team member in private, where you won't be interrupted.

Second, give the feedback from your point of view. Use "I" statements, such as, "I heard that…," "I understand that…," or "I noticed that…." This way, you emphasize your view of the issue, and you avoid making snap judgments or accusations. For example, you could say, "I don't understand what you've done here," rather than, "You've done this wrong."

Let's look at an example of how you can apply the COIN Conversation Model when you're delivering feedback.

You've noticed some friction between two of your team members: Jason, a junior team member, and Corinne, a senior project manager.

At first, you wait to see if they can work it out by themselves. But then Jason approaches you in private. He's upset about a specific issue with Corinne and her behavior. She's refused to accept a project handover from him because he hasn't properly completed some of the documentation. He also feels that her attitude is becoming unnecessarily aggressive.

You decide to talk to Corinne to resolve the issue, using the COIN Conversation Model.

Context

First, you need to establish exactly what you want to discuss with Corinne. In this step, you set out the circumstances of the issue, and the behaviors that you want to address. It's vital that you stick to specifics. Remember, your discussion needs to be tight and controlled, and it must avoid spilling over into other issues.

For example, you might start your conversation with Corinne by saying, "I'm aware that there's been some tension between you and Jason over his project handover notes. Let's see if we can work out a solution together."

This lets her know that you are aware of the issue, but that you're not apportioning blame to either party. It also highlights that your main focus is to seek a solution, rather than to criticize or punish.

Observation

Next, explain what you've observed . Take care to remain objective. Keep your tone of voice neutral, and only state the facts. It's important to avoid judgments, bias and third-party hearsay, or you risk making accusations that could prove unfounded.

You might say to Corinne, "I understand that you refused to accept the project handover from Jason, and that you told him that his work was sloppy. Is that correct?"

Then, allow Corinne to give her side of the argument. Be sure to hear her out, but don't allow the conversation to go off on a tangent. Try to keep it on the right track by reminding her of the main objective of the discussion.

If Corinne starts to describe other reasons for her behavior, or if she tries to deflect the conversation by focusing on another issue, explain that you're happy to discuss these at a later time. Then remind her that this meeting is about dealing with the project handover and her behavior toward Jason.

Impact

The next stage of the COIN model is to outline the effects – positive or negative – that the situation is having on other team members, the organization, or other stakeholders.

Again, stick to the facts. Your intention isn't to make Corinne feel bad, but to help her to understand the negative effects of her actions. For example, you could say, "Jason was very upset, and the project handover was delayed by a day, causing scheduling problems for people in other teams."

Next Steps

Finally, suggest some ways that Corinne could improve the situation, and invite her to contribute some of her own ideas in return. Listen to her answers with an open mind, but remember to focus on the practical steps that she will need to take to ensure successful change.

So, for instance, you could explain to Corinne the resolution that you have in mind by saying, "I'd like you to work with Jason so that he knows exactly what he needs to do to achieve a successful handover. I know that you've suggested a written handover checklist, so maybe you could work together to develop that."

Key Points

The COIN Conversation Model provides a structured approach to giving feedback in a constructive, non-confrontational manner. You can conduct a successful COIN conversation by organizing it into four key stages:

- Context (or Connection).
- Observation.
- Impact.
- Next steps.

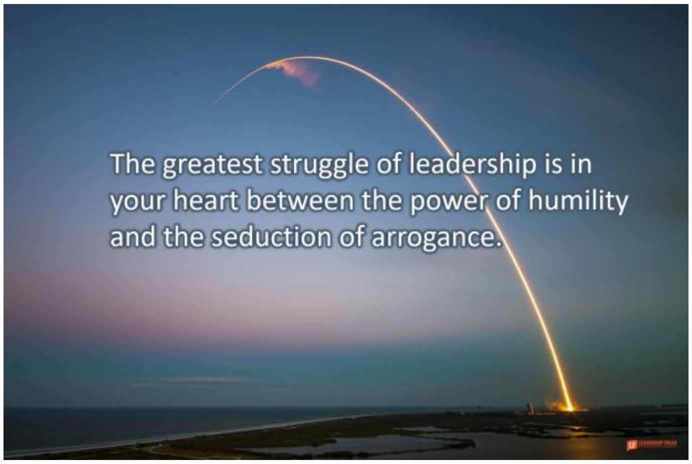
You can use the COIN model to give detailed, objective feedback to your team members, and to help them to achieve positive, long-lasting change.
https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/COIN.htm

FACING THE GREATEST STRUGGLE OF LEADERSHIP

Say, "I'm learning," not "I've learned."

"I've learned," gives the impression of arrival and we both know you ain't there yet.

Learning or learned:



Learning is a matter of the heart, not the head.

You're learning or you're getting stupid.

Learning reflects courage, openness, and humility. Arrogance makes you stupid.

What have you learned:

A member of the audience recently asked, "What have you learned about leading?"

Everyone wants to know 'how to' solve a problem, answer a struggle, or eliminate stress.

Learning new leadership techniques, strategies, methods, and skills is easy compared to the battle that lies within.

The greatest struggle of leadership is in your heart – between the power of humility and the seduction of arrogance.

Humility practices vulnerability.

1. A vulnerable heart learns. *You remain as you are until you open your heart.*
2. An arrogant heart thinks it knows when it doesn't.
3. A humble heart respects the talent, experience, and perspective of others.

Learning new skills – without heart – distracts you from the real work of leadership.

The great delay:

The thing that most delays the growth of leaders is arrogance.

Symptoms of arrogance:

1. Turnover on the team. Talented people run from leaders who won't listen.
2. Feeling you're right, even when you have no experience or training.
3. Needing to have all the answers.
4. Lack of curiosity.
5. Contradicting the voice of experience offhandedly. Often the thing you don't like hearing is the thing you most need to hear.

Less arrogant:

Recently I've found that working to be less arrogant is better than working to be more humble. There's something freeing in the language of 'less arrogant'.

Show up to be a little less arrogant today.

1. Smile. Arrogance looks smug, serious, or high-and-mighty.
2. Ask more questions. Go on a curiosity walk-about.
3. Notice strength in others.

https://leadershipfreak.blog/2018/08/06/facing-the-greatest-struggle-of-leadership/

The TSP's funds are your best choice

By Mike Miles money.federaltimes.com

Let me clear up a misconception: The TSP's three stock index funds are better than a managed portfolio of individual stocks. At least, this is true if your TSP account is used as the source for reliable income in retirement—the purpose for which it is intended.

The TSP's three stock funds—the C, S and I Funds—are unmanaged (or nearly so) large samples of the markets for publicly traded shares of U.S., Europe and Asia-based corporations.

By "better", I mean that the C, S and I Funds are better suited to the purpose of supporting lifetime retirement income and should be expected to produce better results than picking individual stocks. This is true in the same way accurately predicting the outcome of flipping 1,000 coins is easier than doing so for 10.

In order to pick a stock that will outperform its peers, you must correctly identify an opportunity that has been overlooked by the other investors. In today's market of instantly available information and billion-dollar research budgets, this should be considered impossible. The reality is that the expected return for that share of XYZ corporation is about the same as it is for similarly risky investment opportunities. The competition to exploit opportunities makes it so.

By owning lots of opportunities of similar risk—and expected return—you can diversify away much of the risk unique to any company. It is always safer to own more companies of similar risk.

As index funds, the TSP's C, S and I Funds help you to maximize the ratio of expected return to risk by dividing your investment in each fund among hundreds of companies of similar risk—not as exciting as speculating on a hot stock tip or doing your own research, but likely to be more rewarding in the end.

Keep this in mind when you consider moving your TSP to an IRA for access to "better" investment opportunities or demanding that the TSP introduce less diversified investment options to its menu. While these alternatives may satisfy a speculator's desire for additional risk, they don't improve an investor's need for optimal performance. The TSP's selection of funds offers you everything you need to invest for retirement income, if you use them properly.

MONEY MATTERS

Written by Mike Miles, a Certified Financial Planner licensee and principal adviser for Variplan LLC, an independent fiduciary in Vienna, Virginia.

Taken from Federal Times, September 2018 edition.

HOW LEADERS PREDICT THE FUTURE

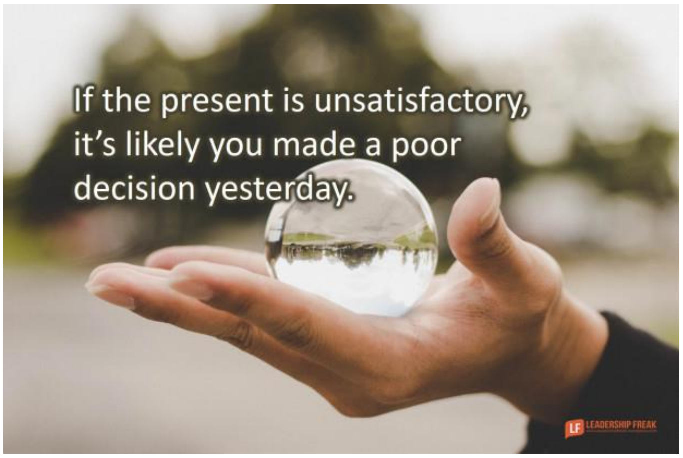
The ridiculous notion that you know what's going to happen tomorrow causes false confidence today. This is verifiable in the buying and selling of stocks, for example.

Daniel Kahneman's research suggests that our ability to predict which stocks to buy or sell is as accurate as flipping a coin. Most who get rich on the stock market should attribute their success to luck.

Create it, don't predict it:

Drucker said, "The only way to predict the future is to create it."

If the present is unsatisfactory, it's likely you made a poor decision yesterday.



Picture the future:

Imagine your preferred future…

1. Relationally. What types of relationships do you want?
2. Financially. Where would you like to be?
3. Personally. How would you like to feel about yourself when you wake up tomorrow?
4. Managerially. How do you want your team/customers to think of you?
5. Organizationally. What does your preferred work environment feel like?

The past is the future for the passive.

What do you need to do right now that makes your preferred future likely?

1. If you want your team to function effectively without you, what do you need to stop doing? What do they need to start doing?
2. If you want a fulfilling marriage, how do you need to treat your spouse now?
3. How might you develop self-reliance in your children today? (Assuming you don't want them living in your basement until they're 40.)
4. What do you need to do now to create an organization people love working at tomorrow?

Hand-wringing isn't the answer.

It's self-defeating to justify an unsatisfying present by pointing fingers at others. Don't think for a minute that your life would be better if someone else made it better.

Creating the future is the work of leaders.

In an unstable world, the best option is creating the future now.

https://leadershipfreak.blog/2018/08/30/how-leaders-predict-the-future/

How to Prioritize

"What happened? How did I get here?"

Julie wondered as she waited in the doctor's office for a prescription to help her get some sleep. Her life had been consumed with competing priorities, constant technology, and the dominating self-talk of,
I can get it all done. and *Everything is important.*

This self-inflicted reflection time made her realize that she needed to do a better job prioritizing.
I want my life to be consumed with activities, meetings, and endless work. I want to work so hard that I don't have time to think about what is important. – Says no one ever

This frenetic pace of juggling and running is at the core of many of our problems.

- We spend so much time working that we develop health issues.
- The pressure of increasing demands at the office makes us appear as strangers to our family members.
- We take on too many projects and find ourselves overworked and under delivering.

How do we prioritize effectively?
The answer, prioritization is a process, not a one-time event.
I like to think of it as a compass that we periodically check throughout our day, week, and month. And if we don't check it regularly, there is a good chance we will be headed somewhere we don't want to be.
When we don't prioritize we start to feel helpless, thinking,
My life is not mine and *I don't have a choice.*

Choose vs. Complain
Do you take ownership for prioritizing your day or continuously complain how out of control it is?
If you are of the mindset that you can't influence your day, then don't even attempt to prioritize.
You will be left with some dis-empowering thoughts like: *Why bother on planning my priorities, they are just going to get put aside by my boss*?
Instead, start by identifying your top three priorities at work and those of your boss.
Guess if you have to.
This type of focus will allow you to start to see your contribution more visibly.
In a Harvard Business Review article, Stop Chasing Too Many Priorities, the research found that as an executive team's priority list grew company revenue declined.

Getting Distracted vs. Going Deep
The reason why some people feel stuck is that they haven't generated enough momentum in any one direction.
Can our people do deep work? That is interruption-free focus periods of 25 minutes. Or have we created a culture of constant noise and interruptions like, *Hey, did you get my email?*
What activities or projects would benefit from deep work?
Today people and organizations are moving a hundred things an inch rather than four things a mile.

Use future-based reflection.
What did we do last month or quarter that was impactful?
Now, if we look back on this month what will our answer be?

Filter vs. Collect
Collecting information can be useful at work or on a project but not having a filter system can be detrimental.
Our need to be *kept in the loop* can fill our inbox with never-ending emails and stuff our calendar full with meeting after meeting.
And this can all lead to paralysis by analysis.
Being able to filter through data, activities, and meetings to discover the vital few among the trivial many is crucial.
When Joseph Juran, a business management consultant, went to help organizations in Japan in the 1950s he discovered how focusing on a few activities could significantly improve the quality of their products. He called this The Law of the Vital Few which has also become known as the 80/20 Rule or Pareto Principle.

Prioritizing is a learned skill and the antidote to the myriad of choices and distractions in today's complex and ever-changing world.

by Eric Papp Time Management Speaker
https://www.ericpapp.com/2018/06/26/